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'This is the best day ever' {page 04}

EMILY ANNE EPSTEIN/METRO

News

Soldiers charged in suicide

Eight in trouble after Danny Chen shot himself Family says he was bullied because of his Chinese ethnicity {page 02}

Wedding bells for Timberlake?

A store's tweet may be true, but it may also be a marketing hoax, obviously {page 16}

Watch out for the nut-jobs

How to tell if that person you met online is a good potential spouse or just unstable {page 19}

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Fellow US soldiers charged in death

Five soldiers charged with negligent homicide after Chinatown soldier killed himself in Afghanistan ◗ Danny Chen reportedly endured hazing

US ARMY

▶ The family of Pvt. Danny Chen said he was bullied and hazed while in Afghanistan; the Army said he killed himself.

Doubting he killed himself

NEW YORK. A friend, Raymond Dong, told the Daily News that he doesn't think Chen killed himself. "I can't believe he would commit suicide," he said.

Dong said the two friends spoke a week before Chen died. "He sounded pleasant and happy," he said.

Family spokesman Frank Gee told Metro the family is relieved to see the Army take action, but that more questions remain about exactly what happened in the day and moments leading to his death. "They hope the truth will come out," said Gee.

Eight soldiers were charged yesterday in the death of a Chinatown soldier found dead in Afghanistan in October.

Danny Chen, 19, was found shot in the head in a guard tower, which the Army attributed to a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

But the soldier's parents — Chinese immigrants who speak little English — demanded more answers, especially after reports surfaced that Chen was bullied while in the Army.

An Army official revealed to CNN yesterday that the charges stem from hazing and abusing Chen to the point where he eventually killed himself.

In one alleged instance, family spokesperson Frank Gee said Chen was dragged out of bed while fellow soldiers threw stones at him and mocked his last name, calling him "Jackie Chan."

The eight soldiers — including one officer — face an array of charges, from negligent homicide to making false statements.

All of the soldiers served with Chen, who was born in the U.S., in the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment in Afghanistan.

Officials charged five with involuntary manslaughter and negligent homicide.

Other charges included maltreatment, possibly in response to the bullying allegations.

The charges, issued from NATO's regional command in Afghanistan, included dereliction of duty and making false statements.

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Charged

▶ Carden

- 1st Lt. Daniel J. Schwartz, the officer charged with dereliction of duty;
- Staff Sgt. Blaine G. Dugas, charged with dereliction of duty and making a false statement;
- Sgt. Travis F. Carden, charged with assault and maltreatment;
- **And:** Staff Sgt. Andrew Van Bockel
- Sgt. Adam Holcomb
- Sgt. Jeffrey Hurst
- Spc. Thomas P. Curtis
- Spc. Ryan J. Offutt — Were all charged with negligent homicide

In the news

Teen charged in fight

A 16-year-old boy was charged yesterday with stabbing a fellow student in the head while they two were at Erasmus Hall High School. Chevoy Nelson is accused of stabbing another teen, who remains in critical condition, in the head as many as seven times.

METRO/CB

In the news

65%

65 percent of voters in New York City, and 64 percent statewide, want Vegas-style casinos to open up in the Empire State, according to a Quinnipiac poll out yesterday. Gov. Andrew Cuomo wants to bring in table games, but he must get Albany's OK. METRO/CB

▶ Aron

Hasidic inbreeding defense?

NEW YORK. The attorney representing Levi Aron, the man accused of killing an 8-year-old boy over the summer, said yesterday that inbreeding in the Hasidic community may have led to his client's insanity.

"It's a very simple case: Levi Aron is either evil or he's crazy," Howard Greenberg told reporters at Brooklyn Supreme Court after a hearing yesterday, according to the New York Daily News. "He suffered a severe head injury as a young man. There's a history of schizophrenia. There's inbreeding in that community."

"Levi Aron is either evil or he's crazy."
GREENBERG

Aron is accused of killing and dismembering Leiby Kletzky. METRO/CB

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You're making them smile this holiday season

"This is the best day ever."
KIRK SPENCE, 11, WHO GOT A TRANSFORMER HELMET, A TEEPEE AND A BASKETBALL

Kids in East New York given basketballs, a bike and even an MP3 player
Thanks to Metro readers, we're able to make the holidays brighter

Metro staffers carried boxes filled with toys yesterday to the Family Resource Center in East New York.

There, four kids, ages 2, 4, 7 and 11, eagerly unwrapped dolls, princess dresses, basketballs, stuffed animals, a T-ball stand and even a bike.

Jayson Perez, 7, received toys at a holiday party two weeks ago, said his mother Beverly Jimenez, but when they went to collect them at the coat check, they were gone.

"He was really upset," she told Metro. Now, with the new toys, "This made his day."

For JaeLyn Young, 4, the box of Animal Planet sea creatures and a plastic tiger were the perfect thing for the little animal lover. He also hugged a stuffed giraffe to his chest.

"I like tigers, pigs and lions," he told Metro.

JaeLyn's mother, Jasmine Rosario, said employees at the resource center helped her find permanent housing after she and her son lived in a homeless shelter. After losing her job, she's now working part time at a day care center, but there isn't much cash around for the holidays. Instead, she's saving up for his January birthday.

"I had no money to buy things," said Rosario.

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PHOTOS: EMILY ANNE EPSTEIN/METRO

▶ Jayson Perez, 7, loved the dinosaur you bought him.

Marines coming to pick up toys

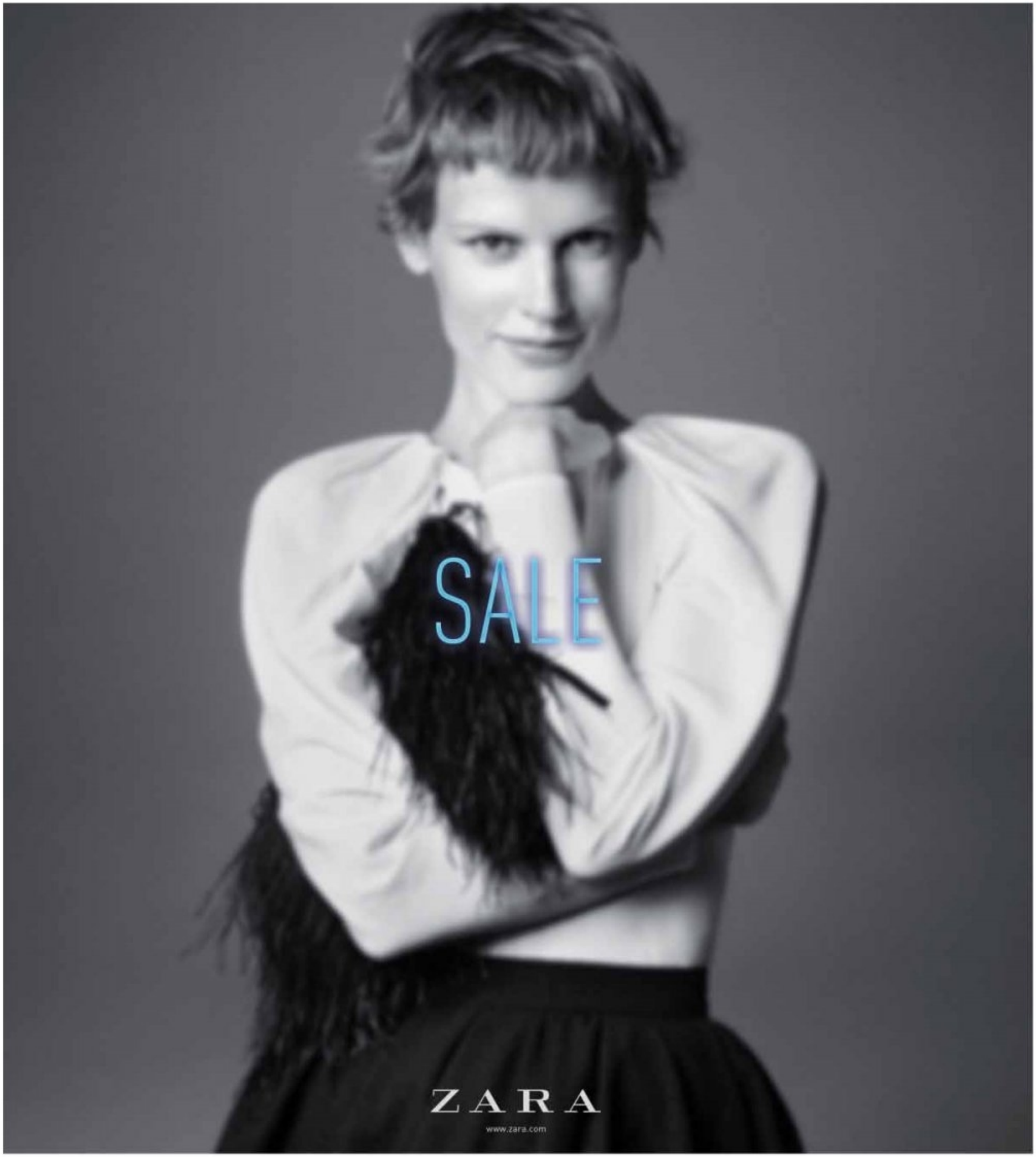
NEW YORK. Thanks to our generous readers, Metro has collected more than 800 toys as part of our drive. We donated about 200 to The Partnership for the Homeless two weeks ago, and brought a dozen to the Family Resource Center yesterday. The remainder will be picked up today by the U.S. Marines, as part of their Toys for Tots program. The Marines will distribute the toys to various organizations throughout the city. METRO/CB

News in pictures

1 Playtime! Jayson Perez, 7, left, and JaeLyn Young, 4, play with a plastic tiger and zookeeper set donated by Metro readers. Metro also dropped off stuffed animals, a tricycle, a teepee and a T-ball stand. One older teen even received an MP3 player.
EMILY ANNE EPSTEIN

2 Ryhanna Whitfield, 2, gives a shy smile after she unwrapped her pink princess outfit, complete with a wand and a tiara. And that's a little Dora the Explorer doll she's cuddling. EMILY ANNE EPSTEIN

3 Two weeks ago, Metro gave away 200 of the toys to kids at a dinner in Brooklyn organized by The Partnership for the Homeless. There, a girl received the board game Chutes and Ladders.
NATE FITCH



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MTA head vows no train cuts

New boss of the MTA makes bold promise Says he does not expect service cuts during his tenure

EMILY ANNE EPSTEIN/METRO

▶ But can new MTA chairman Joe Lhota keep his promise?

It won't happen on his watch. Incoming MTA chairman Joseph Lhota said yesterday he's not looking to slash subway or bus service.

"I do not expect to have any service cuts during my tenure," Lhota said, after a tumultuous board battle over the MTA budget.

Some board members fought vehemently to restore some of the cuts to service enacted by former chair Jay Walder in 2010, asking the authority to allocate $20 million dollars to create 300 jobs and restore unspecified services.

Lhota shot them down — calling the MTA's finances stable, but "fragile" — and asked board members to be patient.

"It is my hope and my prayer that someday we can restore service cuts that had happened last year," Lhota said.

Lhota pledged that he's not "contemplating" service cuts or fare increases in 2012. Last year, the W and V trains were eliminated, many bus routes were shortened and hundreds of toll clerks were let go.

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Transit advocates back Lhota

NEW YORK. Transit advocates are betting on Lhota to keep his word.

"I found him refreshingly honest," said Gene Russianoff of the Straphangers Campaign. "It's to his credit he set that as a goal for himself. He has a sense of what the problems are."

Bill Henderson, an MTA watchdog, said that Lhota learned from the MTA's past mistakes. **METRO/EAE**

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Charging its way into popularity: The bus?

CHRIS HONDROS/GETTY IMAGES

▶ Greyhound has been profiting from low-cost service BoltBus. With fuel prices high, bus services have seen an increase in ridership.

Curbside bus service is up as gas prices and perks like Wi-Fi make driving less attractive Regulators warn that safety may be an issue

Megabus.com and BoltBus led U.S. curbside bus companies that boosted trips by 32 percent this year as travelers opted to leave their cars behind and surf the Internet while traveling, DePaul University researchers said.

The popularity of U.S. intercity buses picking up passengers at the curb rather than in a terminal has been growing since the industry reversed a 46-year decline in 2006, Joseph Schwieterman, director of DePaul's Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development in Chicago, said in a telephone interview. Bus traffic including traditional service grew this year at the fastest pace since 2008, the institute said in a study released today.

Higher gasoline costs make driving a car more expensive at the same time as buses offer access to free Wi-Fi and cheaper fares than on planes and trains, Schwieterman said. Once viewed as a last resort in the U.S., bus travel is now attracting more affluent riders, students and women traveling alone, he said.

"There's a fatigue over driving combined with a revitalized image of the bus," Schwieterman said.

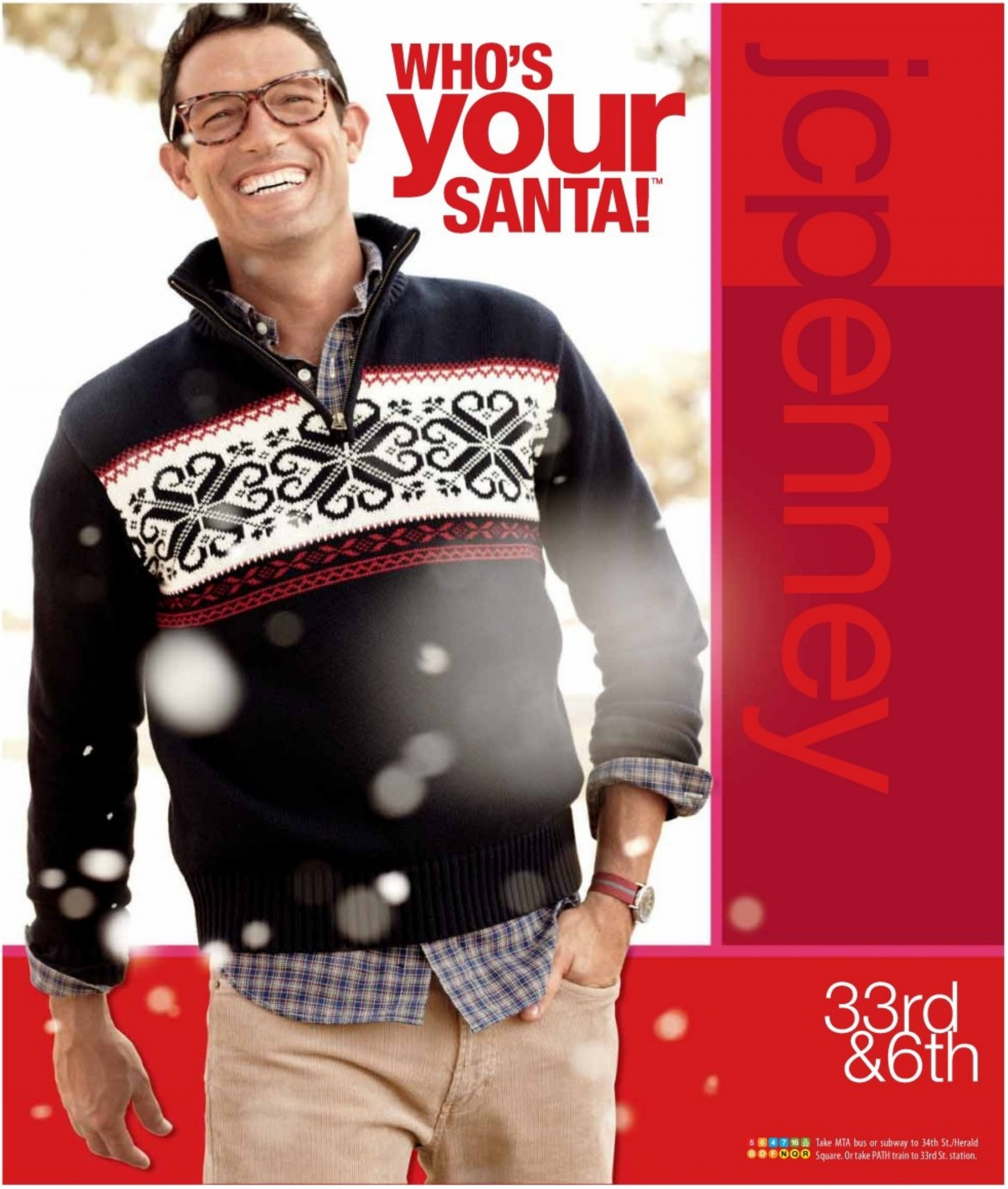
Daily intercity curbside bus departures increased to 778 from 589 a year ago, according to DePaul. **BLOOMBERG**

Quoted

"Bus travel is suddenly cool."
SCHWIETERMAN

Safety second?

NEW YORK. Regulators are questioning the safety of bus travel after 28 people died in eight crashes this year. The National Transportation Safety Board warned in an Oct. 31 study that curbside operators are seven times more likely to be involved in a fatal wreck than traditional intercity lines. **BLOOMBERG**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N. Korea's military to share power with Jong-un

North Korea will shift to collective rule from a strongman dictatorship after last week's death of Kim Jong-il, although his untested young son will be at the head of the ruling coterie, a source with close ties to Pyongyang and Beijing said.

The source added that the military, which is trying to develop a nuclear arsenal, has pledged allegiance to the untested Kim Jong-un, who takes over the family dynasty that has ruled North Korea since it was founded after World War II.

The source declined to be identified but has correctly predicted events in the past, telling Reuters about the North's first nuclear test in 2006 before it took place.

The comments are the first signal that North Korea is following a course that many analysts have anticipated — it will be governed by a group of people for the first time since it was founded in 1948.

Both Kim Jong-il and his father Kim Il-sung were all-powerful, authoritarian rulers of the isolated state.

REUTERS

GETTY IMAGES

▶ North Korean soldiers gather near the bank of the Yalu River yesterday in the North Korean town of Sinuiji.

Syrian forces massacre 111 civilians and activists

Syrian forces killed 111 people ahead of the start of a mission to monitor President Bashar al-Assad's implementation of an Arab League peace plan, activists said yesterday, and France branded the killings an "unprecedented massacre."

Rami Abdulrahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 111 civilians and activists were killed in addition to more than 100 casualties among army deserters in Idlib province, turning yesterday into the "bloodiest day of the Syrian revolution."

REUTERS

"[It was the] bloodiest day of the Syrian revolution."

RAMI ABDULRAHMAN OF THE SYRIAN OBSERVATORY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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Today's the last day to vote in our Man and Woman of the Year contest.

Apple co-founder Steve Jobs and the Occupy movement are vying for the win, while Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords is in third place. Place your vote before 5 tonight by e-mailing your pick to mwoty@metro.us. The winner will be announced in a special holiday edition on Dec. 27.

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Chinese hackers attacked US: WSJ

Hackers in China broke through the computer defenses of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce last year and were able to access information about its operations and its 3 million members, the Wall Street Journal reported yesterday.

In Beijing, China dismissed the report.

The Journal, citing unidentified people familiar with the matter, reported the operation against the top American business lobbying group involved at least 300 Internet addresses and was discovered and shut down in May 2010. REUTERS

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

▶ U.S. Speaker of the House Rep. John Boehner is playing hardball over a payroll tax-cut deal.

"It angers me that House Republicans would rather continue playing politics than find solutions." SCOTT BROWN

Leadership in question

WASHINGTON. In Congress' tense drama over how to extend payroll tax cuts for 160 million Americans, it may be the most intriguing subplot: whether Republican House Speaker John Boehner is losing his grip on members of his own party.

Boehner and many Republicans scoff at the idea.

But the House's rejection on Tuesday of a bipartisan Senate plan to extend the tax cuts for two months has raised questions about Boehner's efforts to lead compromise-resistant House Republicans who have helped ratchet up the tension in Congress. REUTERS

President reaches for a tax deal

WASHINGTON. In a bid to end a worsening standoff over extending a tax break for Americans, President Barack Obama urged Republican House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner yesterday to pass a short-term extension and return to talks on a year-long deal in the New Year.

Obama asked Boehner and House Republicans to drop their opposition to a short-term measure that the Senate passed overwhelmingly at the weekend and signaled an unwillingness to reopen negotiations now. REUTERS

160M

Obama telephoned Boehner and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to stress his willingness to work with Congress to get an agreement on the expiring payroll tax cut for 160 million Americans.

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myentertainemnt

THE WORD

Metro's **Dorothy Robinson** shares her take on the world of gossip @dorothyatmetro dorothy.robinson@metro.us

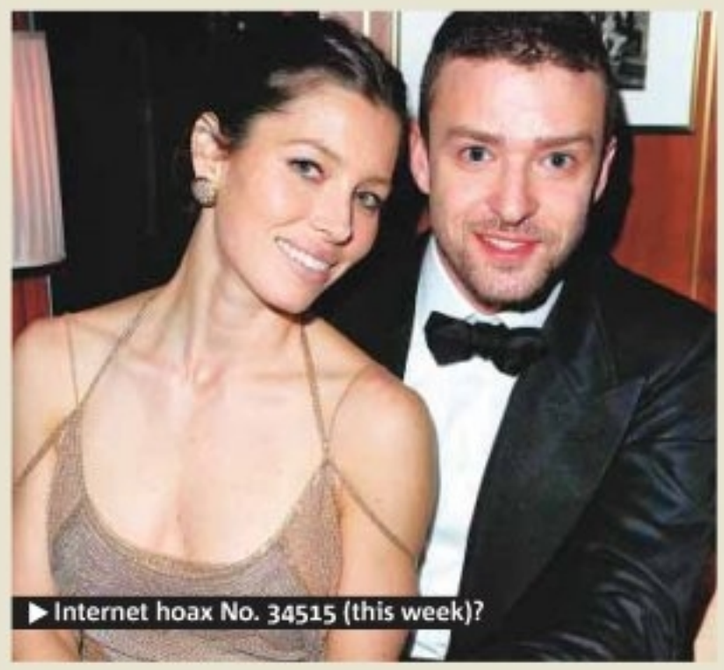
He's no Seacrest

Steve Jones reportedly will not return as host of the U.S. edition of "The X-Factor" after one season on the job, according to Hollyscoop. "He got terrible reviews from critics when he started, and things haven't got better. There have been mistakes, and he just doesn't seem to have the knack for dealing with contestants," a source says. "The executives at Fox have already decided not to renew his contract — and so, short of a miracle happening, it is pretty much a done deal that he will not take part next season."

However, Jones' rep told People magazine that the reports of his imminent dismissal were "a fabrication." "There have been absolutely no conversations about Steve Jones leaving 'The X Factor,'" the representative told the magazine.

Man, it's sad that a rumored firing is the only way to make people care about "The X-Factor."

▶ Is Steve Jones in or out?



▶ Internet hoax No. 34515 (this week)?

Timberlake off the market?

I take this with a huge grain of salt, but some people out there on the World Wide Web are reporting that **Justin Timberlake** and **Jessica Biel** are engaged. (Remember: This is the same Internet that also said that **Bon Jovi** died earlier this week.) Lainey Gossip points to this tweet from a gallery owner in Jackson, Wyo.: "Word on the street is that Justin Timberlake proposed to Jessica Biel at the Amangani last night...we're picking out post-engagement presents for them just in case they come in! Trying to play it cool..."

Sounds like a huge publicity stunt from the gallery store owner, but you never know. The Twitter works in mysterious ways.

The feed ...

▶ Checking in with some of Hollywood's biggest names to see what they've been up to — in their own words, in 140 characters or fewer.

Joel McHale feels informed, Rosario Dawson is rocking out, Nathan Fillion is feeling forgetful and Sarah Silverman isn't ready for battle.

▶ **@joelmchale:** Thanks news outlets. I am now fully informed about how the Post Office is busier around the holidays. Man, was I in the dark.

▶ **@rosariodawson:** I'm so glad I made it back to London in time to surprise my Mama with Duran Duran at the O2! They just played my song! Rio!!!!!!

▶ **@sarahksilverman:** Had a war time dream where I had to go to battle but I didn't want to because I had a zit

▶ **@NathanFillion:** Dear Morning Coffee, How was your ride to work on top of my car? Glad you made it. But now you're iced coffee. Nathan

Fillion

Talking points

JLo divorce is getting nasty

While they've remained civil since their July split, it's reportedly about to get very ugly between **Jennifer Lopez** and **Marc Anthony** with a "vicious" custody battle on the way, according to Us Weekly. The trigger seems to be Lopez's new boyfriend, **Casper Smart**, and his apparent bonding with Lopez and Anthony's 3-year-old twins, **Max and Emme**. Anthony reportedly "hit the roof" after seeing photos of Lopez, Smart and the kids enjoying Thanksgiving together in Hawaii and is "going back on his word and saying he wants joint custody," a source says. "He wants to make Jennifer suffer because she's having fun with someone new, and he knows this will hurt her."

Penn gets into another screaming match

Sean Penn reportedly got into a screaming match at LAX airport recently with former costar — and long-time Penn critic — **Maria Conchita Alonso**,

▶ Penn

the actress reveals in an interview with Washington, D.C., radio station WMAL. "I said, 'You are a communist, Sean Penn.' He said, 'You are a pig!' So I said, 'And you are a communist a—hole! Is it great to live the way you do as a communist?'" Alonso says. The actress, who

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

▶ Alonso

starred with Penn in 1988's "Colors," says she wanted to apologize "for calling Sean Penn an a—hole. He is an intelligent man," she says. "But if someone calls me a pig, I am not going to turn the other cheek. I don't regret calling him a communist."

The Bieber paternity case still on

Justin Bieber may have thought that taking a DNA test had gotten him clear of **Mariah Yeater**, the woman claiming Bieber is the father of her baby, but as far as she is concerned, nothing has been resolved. "I dropped my lawsuit, but never my claim," Yeater tells the Chicago Sun-Times. "I still definitely want a DNA test and I want to refile my paternity case." As for **Robbie Powell**, who claims that he actually is the baby's father? "He is not the father, and he's locked up and out of the picture."

Ballerinas on Wall Street and more

1. Tom Cruise and Jimmy Fallon play "Wreath Toss" during a taping of "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon" at Rockefeller Center on Tuesday in New York City.

2. Dancers Tiler Peck and Robert Fairchild from The New York City Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker" posed for a photo after ringing the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday in New York City.

3. Sir Paul McCartney performed onstage at The Liverpool Echo Arena on Tuesday in Liverpool, United Kingdom.

4. Lady Gaga arrived at Narita International Airport on Tuesday in Narita, Japan.

5. Filmmaker Martin Scorsese (who is the human form of the old man in "Up") attended the screening of "Mean Streets" at The Film Society of Lincoln Center on Tuesday in New York City.

6. Rapper Roscoe Dash attended the VIBE & Roscoe Dash J.U.I.C.E. 2011 holiday party at Gold Bar on Tuesday in New York City.

7. Harry Connick Jr. arrived for the "Late Show With David Letterman" at the Ed Sullivan Theater on Tuesday in New York City.

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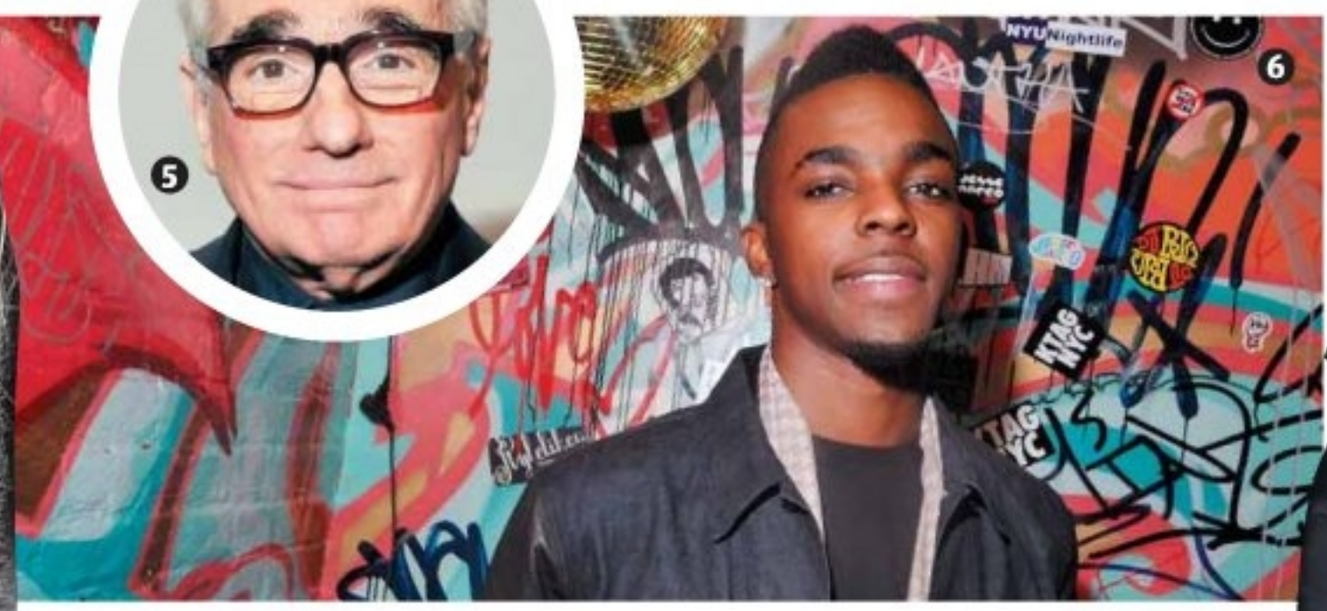

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TV watch list

'Hollywood at Home'

SPECIAL. Celebrities like Andie MacDowell, Kelly Bensimon, George Jones and "Dancing with the Stars" pro Mark Ballas show off how they deck the halls for the holiday season. **8 p.m., HGTV**

'The X Factor'

REALITY. A $5 million contract, spot in a Super Bowl commercial and Simon Cowell's eternal claim that he or she "is a star because of me" go to America's first "X Factor" winner tonight. **Season finale, 8 p.m., Fox**

'Funny or Die's Billy on the Street'

COMEDY. Comic Billy Eichner transforms his on-the-street interviews into a game show. **Series premiere, 10 p.m., Fuse** AMBER RAY

Into the woods with acrobats

COREY TATARCZUK

▶ Gracie White stars as Snow White, left, and Laura Careless as the evil Queen in Company XIV's "Snow White."

No dwarves appear in Austin McCormick's sleek, sexy "Snow White." Taken from the original scary Grimm story, this is a tale of envy and murder, of a wicked stepmother plotting against a lovely young girl.

McCormick, a Juilliard grad who's trained as a baroque dancer, has been refining his grand concepts at a former truck warehouse in Carroll Gardens for several years, and building a powerful multidisciplinary ensemble, Company XIV, reprising a production first seen here in 2009. The writing (by Jeff Takacs, who narrates his rhyming script in a stentorian bass voice) is sharp, the visual landscape is dazzling and a lot of the music is live — snippets of Respighi, Gounod and others sung by soprano Lauren-Michelle, who moves among the actor-dancers as though her dramatic tones were the most natural thing in the world.

Laura Careless is killer, literally, as the evil Queen who plots, ingeniously but unsuccessfully, to eliminate her stepdaughter. Snow White herself, Gracie White, is a very young performer from Minnesota's Circus Juventas who, along with two compatriots, joins Company XIV and takes the enterprise to a whole new level, at ease swinging yards above the floor. When her prince (Joseph McEachern, another circus veteran) comes to rescue her, their bodies work together perfectly.

Billed as a family show, this production might frighten young children, but the tweens, teens and adults in the house are transfixed. A maximalist mash-up of dance, theater, opera, circus, cinema and burlesque, it features half-naked men wrapped in corsets and seductive women of all ages. McCormick's sure theatrical sense guides it to a satisfying conclusion.

If you go

'Snow White'
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PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Top 5 films

▶ "The Adventures of Tintin" is a must-see 3-D experience.

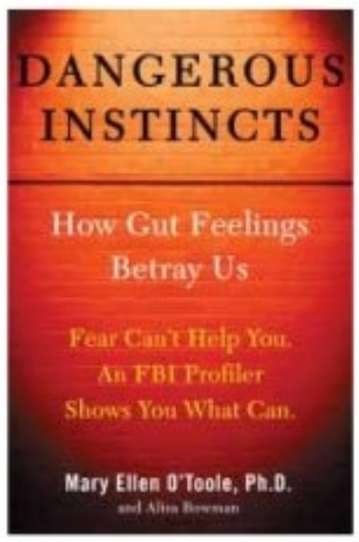
1 'The Adventures of Tintin' The beloved Belgian comic book character gets animated in 3-D by two of the most celebrated director-slash-producers in Hollywood, Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson. Expect to be amazed.

2 'We Bought a Zoo' Cameron Crowe directs Matt Damon in this tearjerker based on a true story about a widower who buys a dilapidated zoo in order to give his kids a wholesome childhood.

3 'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo' David Fincher adapts the book and Swedish movie for those of us who don't like reading subtitles. Rooney Mara, as Lisbeth Salander, has already been nominated for awards for her stellar performance.

4 'Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows' Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.) and Watson (Jude Law) pick up where they left off — and this time, they're after dastardly Professor Moriarity (Jared Harris of "Mad Man") with Rachel McAdams and the original Lisbeth Salander from the Swedish "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo" films, Noomi Rapace.

5 'Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol' With a bombing of the Kremlin incorrectly blamed on his team, Ethan Hunt (Cruise) and his colleagues are forced to go underground to prove their innocence. This film's bound to be at the top of the list for any thrill-seeker. METRO


DANGEROUS INSTINCTS
How Gut Feelings Betray Us
Fear Can't Help You. An FBI Profiler Shows You What Can.
Mary Ellen O'Toole, Ph.D.
and Alisa Bowman

Screening for crazies: Tips for evaluating someone you met online

FBI profiler and author of 'Dangerous Instincts' Mary Ellen O'Toole, Ph.D., shares her tips for personality assessment Key red flags to look for

Given that online dating has become so common, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that some of the people you'll meet on the Web could be not only just not your type, but mentally unstable as well. Author Mary Ellen O'Toole, Ph.D., has evaluated serial killers during her long career as an FBI behavioral analyst. In her new book, "Dangerous Instincts," O'Toole outlines the methods she uses to screen for personality disorders. She offers some strategies for teasing out valuable information that can keep you safe while dating online.

Here are some dating profile red flag phrases:

▶ **"I'm not into playing games."** "That is almost what we would call a protest statement," says O'Toole. "You never brought that up to begin with. It's not likely that you would, so why do they bring it up? Do they bring it up because they've been accused of that before? Do they bring it up because that's the kind of thing they do? Do they bring it up because they're projecting onto you and are anticipating that you'll play games? You don't know, but ... you want to see if this ultimately becomes important."

▶ **"I'm looking for someone who is going to be my soul mate."** "You want to look at who is the most important person in this e-mail. Is it the writer or is it you?" says O'Toole. "[Beware of] someone who seems to become jealous, or possessive and says, 'I can't live without you' or 'You are my soul mate, I can tell right away.' A needy man or woman might think 'He really loves me,' but the flip side of that — three months down the road — is, 'This guy is a stalker.'"

▶ **"I'm not the kind of person who would cheat on my wife."** "That makes them look very defensive," O'Toole says. "The next question: 'Is that just their linguistic style or is there a reason for it?' There are some people who have that 'the world is half-empty' outlook and they believe that no matter what they do, you're going to cheat. It becomes an inevitable conclusion for them."

HEIDI PATALANO
heidi.patalano@metro.us

Reader love notes

SEND US YOUR LOVE NOTES

E-mail **lovenotes@metro.us** with your special message and we'll print it in the next dating section. Please keep your note to 20 characters or fewer.

▶ *DM U mke my hrt happy! SM*
▶ ***MerMoo, wuv u so much - 4 ever stinky lou!***
▶ *Pretty Girl, u r everything to me. Luv u forever and a day! Freestyles Finest*
▶ ***Lance, without u I can't breathe or smile, u complete me. A. C.***
▶ *Elias Babe, I Luv You So Much! Ur A Dream In Everyway! Luv Naya*
▶ ***Tina, Thank you for 35 years of beautiful love and marriage. You will always be my IGW.***
▶ *Kevin, Elephant juice! We are truly one. Love Nyya*

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Letters

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Not Gaga for this headline

RE: "YOU AND ME COULD WRITE A BAD ROMANCE": Did you write that headline yourself? I don't know about you, but me could write a better headline. **SANDY FOUTZ, VIA E-MAIL**

Voters expect the impossible

RE: "VOTE THE LITTLE KINGS OUT NOW": Mike Miller refers to elected officials as kings. If the American dream has become a nightmare, it cannot be placed so conveniently at the doorsteps of elected officials. We have pushed elected officials into an economic catch-22 in the way of our many entitlements — which we wish to retain, while refusing the increased taxation that go with them. These are mutually exclusive propositions. **JOHN DINGA, VIA E-MAIL**

Mixed bag on our freedoms

RE: "FOUNDERS GAVE PRESS THE RIGHT": Mr. Van Looy's recent letter distresses me. His assertion is incorrect: The First Amendment never mentions news media corporations. Even more distressing is the claim that the Constitution gives rights: The Federalist Papers show that the Constitution only limits the powers of the government; it can't give rights because they are already possessed by the people. **JESSE M. PORCH, VIA E-MAIL**

The historical record is very clear that the founding fathers meant that the First Amendment was a universal principle that applied to all. The "freedom of the press" does not protect the press as an industry, it protects everyone's use of the printing press. The vast majority of all Supreme Court opinions on this issue have ruled that there is to be equal treatment for all speakers, regardless of whether the speaker is part of the press as an industry or not. **RON SHELTON, MANHATTAN**

There is a humongous difference between the mere advocacy coming from an editorial page like Metro's and the financial control exerted by the superwealthy, self-serving types such as the Koch brothers, Bank of America and Citibank. If the paper doesn't serve public interest, people can stop reading it. The same is not true of all-too-powerful, robber baron banksters who have their filthy little fingers in every bit of money they can find around the globe! **JD DUCAS, VIA E-MAIL**

E-mail your letters: **letters@metro.us**

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words. Metro reserves the right to edit all letters. Please include your name and contact information.

Horoscope

♑ Capricorn **Dec. 22-Jan. 19.** If you hope to be an effective leader, you must first set the example. They'll believe only in what you do, not necessarily in what you say.

♒ Aquarius **Jan. 20-Feb. 19.** That sudden whim to drop in on someone might not be such a good idea. If she or he is in the middle of something and doesn't want to be disturbed, you won't be welcomed.

♓ Pisces **Feb. 20-March 20.** Look gift horses in the mouth, and with a jaundiced eye. Should someone give you something for no apparent reason, chances are he or she will be expecting you to return the favor.

♈ Aries **March 21-April 19.** This can be either a good day or a disappointing one, depending upon your choice of companions. Select pals who share the same interests as you.

♉ Taurus **April 20-May 20.** Your attention span might not have much staying power, so it could be best to do all the demanding tasks first. As you tire, switch to no-brainer jobs that can be knocked off quickly.

♊ Gemini **May 21-June 20.** Don't be too quick to put much credence in a business proposal presented by a new acquaintance. The item that's for sale could be all sizzle, no steak.

♋ Cancer **June 21-July 22.** Should two friends of yours be at odds, even though you favor them equally and wish to help, stay out of it and don't try to be a peacemaker. Both could turn on you instead.

♌ Leo **July 23-Aug. 22.** If you're using a helpmate to tackle a hazardous task, keep a watchful eye on what this person is doing. Being less knowledgeable, he or she won't be as safety-conscious as you.

♍ Virgo **Aug. 23-Sept. 22.** As prudent as you are, you could still let your guard down and empty your wallet before you know it. Strive to be prudent in all your involvements, especially ones of a social nature.

♎ Libra **Sept. 23-Oct. 23.** When making a request of your mate, a lack of tact on your part could cause him or her to react in a way opposite from the one you were hoping for. Don't be careless in your choice of words.

♏ Scorpio **Oct. 24-Nov. 22.** Friends aren't likely to be prepared to cope with any last-minute changes. Thus, try to let them know your intentions well in advance.

♐ Sagittarius **Nov. 23-Dec. 21.** Your expectations might not be based upon realistic factors. Thus, self-discipline is likely to be required in order to subdue temptations. **BERNICE BEDE OSOL**

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Across
1 Oater backdrop
5 Hannibal foe
10 Seductive woman
14 Heavy metal
15 Orchard tree
16 Shrink's reply (2 wds.)
17 Grumpy mood
18 Slot machine city
19 Toucan feature
20 Like pottery
22 Repeat
24 Comic __ Philips
25 Hawaii's Mauna __
26 Like some engines
30 Main
34 Yalies
35 Minute amounts
37 EEC currency
38 Old crone
39 Kind of reaction
40 San Francisco hill
41 Piccadilly statue
43 Magazine parts
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52 Sell moonshine
56 Beat back
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61 Bricklayer
63 Men's furnishings
64 Deep-voiced lady
65 Trouser feature
66 Comics' Miss Kett
67 Right away
68 Golden
69 Ricky Ricardo

Down
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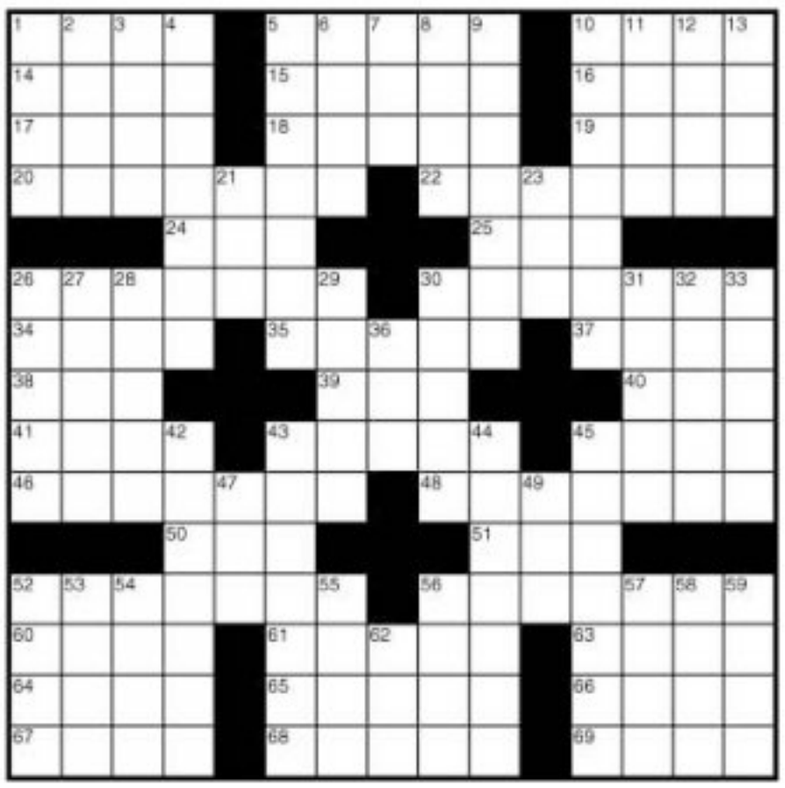
2 Urn homophone
3 Yves's eve
4 Hercules out-wrestled him
5 Pasta choice
6 Sheik's cartel
7 Auto-sticker info
8 Jai __
9 Cuddles up
10 Hum
11 Riding the waves
12 Carnivore's diet
13 Lap dog
21 2,001, to Augustus
23 Immeasurable time
26 Change the length
27 A moon of Jupiter
28 Intolerant person
29 Forum attire
30 Supply a banquet
31 Tiff (hyph.)
32 Bakery come-on
33 Earring sites
36 Barge pusher
42 Depot
43 Knock off the air
44 Highway speed, often
45 Watered down
47 Bracket type
49 Go one better
52 Cote sounds
53 Peace Prize city
54 Director __ Preminger
55 Dressy event
56 Chestnut or bay
57 Lo-cal
58 Cliques
59 __ Morales of "La Bamba"
62 Do embroidery



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SUDOKU **LEVEL: EASY**

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SUDOKU **LEVEL: HARD**

Solution to yesterday's crossword

Y	E	L	P		S	O	F	A	R		D	A	B	S
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A	M	I	S		R	I	O	T		B	O	N	E	D
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T	E	R	A		C	O	A	T	I		E	E	L	S
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T	R	E	Y		E	S	S	A	Y		S	L	A	T

How to play Sudoku: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

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food&drink

Let it Tso! Let it Tso! Let it Tso!

Chinese food on Christmas is an American tradition
Reserve tables now for Christmas and Christmas Eve Metro's picks

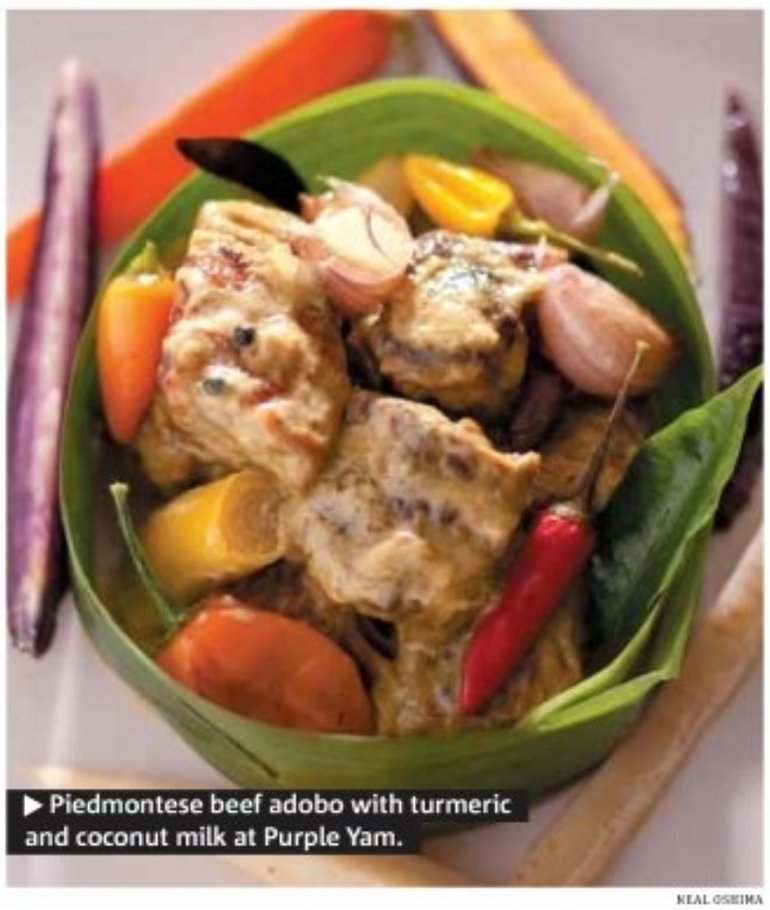
Happy holidays from the melting pot, where more and more New Yorkers are adopting the ancient Jewish ritual of going out for Chinese food on Christmas. This year, why not branch out into other Asian (and Asian-inspired) cuisines? Here are our picks for the holiday weekend:

Boerum Hill's **Mile End Delicatessen (646-494-9508, mileendbrooklyn.com)**, purveyor of artisanal noshies, will be offering a "Traditional Jewish Christmas" menu all weekend. It's the perfect meal to show off their appetizing expertise, with Szechuan pickles to start and a roasted Peking duck. A pupu platter comes with lamb spring rolls, smoked trout Rangoon, smoked meat sesame buns, and chicken dumplings. Reservations are required.

Authentic South Indian vegetarian (and certified Kosher) restaurant **Saravasana Bhavan (212-684-7755, saravanabhavan.com)** will be open for business on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day at both their Upper West Side and Curry Hill locations. Order a bounty of spiced dumplings, doughnuts and breads, but leave room for their huge dosas: rolled rice crepes with spicy fillings.

Saravasana Bhavan
SUSHIL KUMAR

Head over the river and through the woods to Ditmas Park, where **Purple Yam 718-940-8188, purpleyamnyc.com)** will be serving Noche Buena (Christmas Eve in the Philippines) and Christmas Day meals featuring heritage ham simmered in pineapple and rum, as well as a lechon pork belly entree. Be sure to order one of their inspired desserts: kalamansi (citrus indigenous to the Philippines) soufflé, bibingka (rice flour cake) with feta and gouda cheeses, or persimmon bread pudding.


Piedmontese beef adobo with turmeric and coconut milk at Purple Yam.
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REBECCA FINKEL
letters@metro.us

Cocktail recipe

The Dragon Tattoo
What's in it:
- **1.5 oz.** SKYY Infusions Dragon Fruit
- **.5 oz.** American Honey Liqueur
- **1 oz.** peach nectar
- **5** raspberries
- Squeeze of lemon
- **1** sugar cube

Muddle ingredients (except sugar cube) and shake over ice. Place sugar cube in the bottom of the glass and strain drink over it. Top with champagne.

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Tom Hill
CGA STAFF WRITER
Every three minutes another person falls behind on credit card debt. It's no wonder, since every major credit card company has nearly doubled the minimum monthly payment on consumers' bills. Federal Regulators forced the change because of their concern about the growing mountain of consumer debt, which stands at $2.17 trillion. Many consumers can only pay the minimum payment, which can take up to 30 years to pay off. Now, relief is in sight for millions of Americans.
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drink

▶ You can check out the Bloody Mary bar at Saxon + Parole for yourself at 316 Bowery (www.saxonandparole.com).

COURTESY OF SAXON + PAROLE

THE MORNING AFTER

Don't spend the first day of 2012 in bed with a hangover For the hair of the dog, make a Bloody Mary Saxon + Parole to the rescue

Sure, on the first day of 2012, you might wake up and wonder where the night went — but, hey, that's what resolutions are for. Until you can get those resolutions rolling, why not make yourself feel a little bit better by making yourself the ultimate Bloody Mary?

The bar manager of the new NoHo hot spot Saxon + Parole, Naren Young, along with the restaurant's general manager, Linden Pride, have created a Bloody Mary that will put the spring back in your step.

Young's No. 1 tip? Use fresh vegetable juices as your base instead of prepackaged tomato juice. "We only use freshly squeezed tomato, carrot and celery juices for our Bloodys," he says. "This makes it very light, fresh and fragrant. The canned stuff is full of sugar and can weigh you down, which will only make you feel worse."

Here are a few more tips from Young on making the ultimate Bloody Mary.

You don't have to stick with vodka: Using various spirits other than vodka (Saxon + Parole's Bloody Mary selection features gin, tequila, aquavit and white whiskey). "We have a Red Snapper on the menu, which is actually the original Bloody Mary," he notes. "It's gin-based."

DIY

A Bloody Mary bar

If you're having friends over for brunch on Jan. 1, Young recommends having a Bloody Mary bar. "I would make a batch of freshly squeezed vegetable juices, then have a spread of spirits, salts, peppers, fresh herbs, citrus and some kind of pickle," he says. "Bloodys are a very personal drink."

Citrus and spice: A Bloody can't be fresh tomato juice alone. "They also need some sort of spice," he notes. "That can be anything from crushed chillies to Sriracha to hot sauce. It livens the palate and makes the world seem like not such a bad place after a rough night. You also need some sort of citrus. From there, it's up to you on what else to include."

Cocktail of the week

Saxon + Parole's Bloody Mary

What's in it:

- **1½ oz.** garlic-infused vodka
- **5 oz.** tomato juice
- **½ oz.** lemon juice
- **4 dashes** Worcestershire sauce
- **3 dashes** Green Tabasco
- **2 dashes** Red Tabasco
- Good pinch of salt / good grind of black pepper / pinch of celery salt
- **½ tsp.** horseradish
- **½ tsp.** tomato paste

Directions:
Build over ice on a highball glass. For garnish, use a smoked aleppo salt rim, then a skewer of pepperoncini, sliced okra and a lemon wedge.

▶ Drink up!

DOROTHY ROBINSON
dorothy.robinson@metro.us

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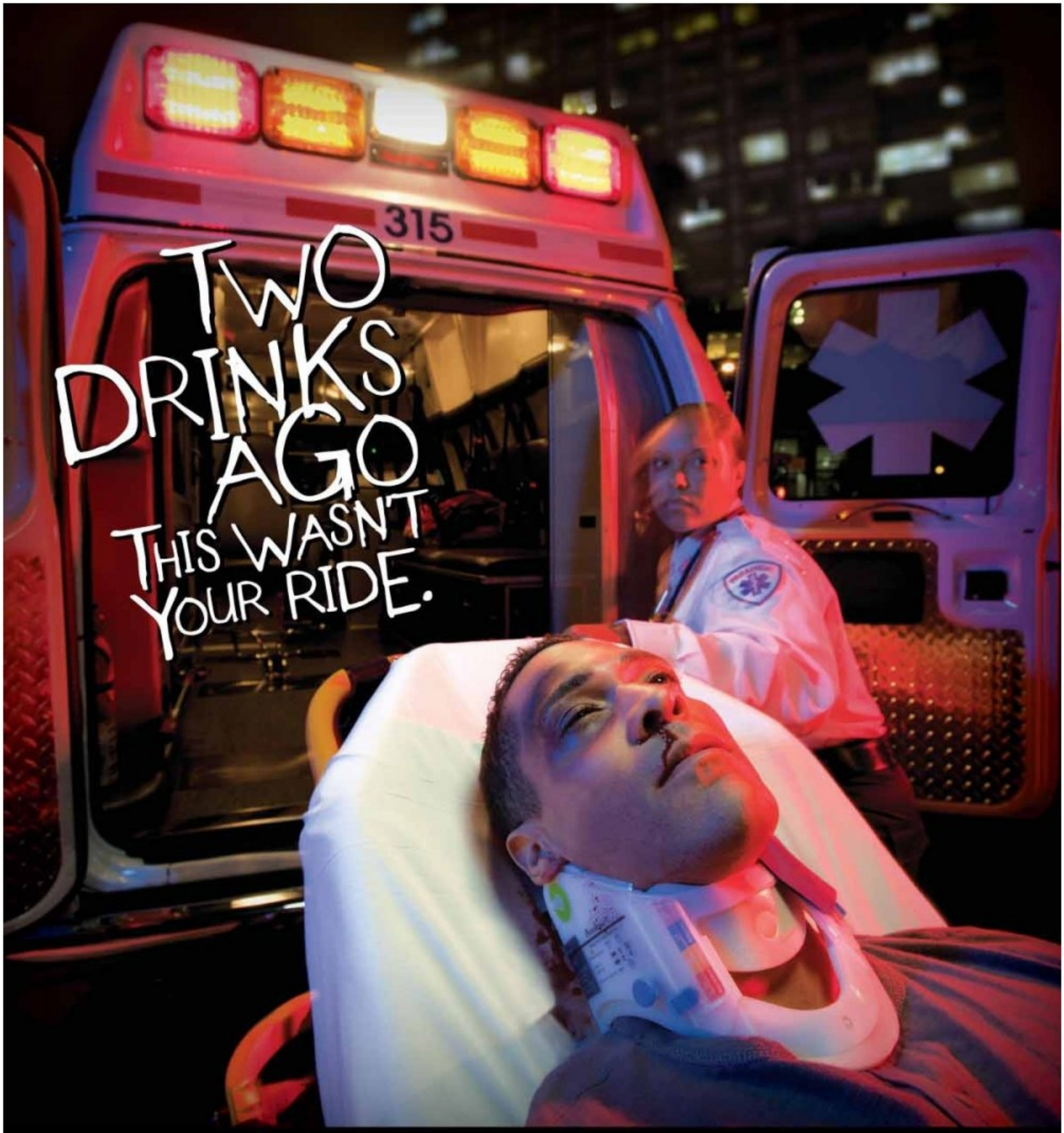

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Burress ready to face his old team

When Plaxico Burress signed with the Jets in August, he insisted his move to the crosstown rivals was anything but a shot fired at his old Giants team.

On Christmas Eve, Burress gets a chance to face the team he played with for more than four years and where he won a Super Bowl.

Now, he's a full-fledged Jet.

"It's a business first. I'm still in contact with some of the guys who play over there. We did some special things when we were over there, obviously winning the world championship," Burress said. "When we go out there on Sunday, when we go out there and lace them up, we're enemies for the next three or four hours."

GETTY IMAGES
▶ Burress

After spending the last two years in prison, Burress has surprised many with his solid return.

"I definitely want to get into the end zone once, twice, maybe three or four," Burress said. "I'm going to go out and try to play lights-out football." KRISTIAN DYER

In the news

Mayweather goes to prison

It'll probably be easier to duck Manny Pacquiao in jail.

Boxer Floyd Mayweather was sentenced to 90 days in jail yesterday after pleading guilty to a domestic violence incident last year involving his ex-girlfriend.

Receivers bash Jets' CB Revis

Giants wide receiver Mario Manningham isn't impressed with All-Pro cornerback Darrelle Revis.

"We don't put him on a pedestal," Manningham said. "It's just that quarterbacks get too scared to throw his way."

Manningham added that all the Jets corners get too much credit.

"I think it's more about the schemes than the players."

Hakeem Nicks meanwhile shrugged and called Revis "decent." METRO/TW

Giants firing back

After holding it in, many on Big Blue finally cut loose on mouthy rivals ● Jacobs says Rex has false bravado ● McKenzie points to championship

NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

▶ Brandon Jacobs shot back at Rex Ryan's comments about the Jets being a better team.

The Giants bit their tongues as long as they could, but eventually they had to cut loose. Try as they might, many Giants couldn't resist firing back at their co-tenants when repeatedly asked their thoughts on the braggadocios Jets.

When asked his thoughts on what the Jets — particularly their head coach Rex Ryan — have been saying all week, Giants running back Brandon Jacobs was more than happy to give his thoughts.

"That's just Rex being Rex. He does everything he needs to do to get his team fired up and you can't blame him. If that is what he feels like he has to do, then he has to do it," said Jacobs, adding he thinks Ryan's bluster is false bravado. "I think they're trying to fulfill something [and] put something in people that may not be there."

Right tackle Kareem McKenzie, usually one of the more reflective Giants, said all this talk about whose town this is shouldn't be up for debate.

"Which team's had the most recent success in terms of winning a championship? The Giants. Plain and simple, there it is," said McKenzie. "When you say most successful, have they accomplished the goal of winning a championship? No. .... Chirp if you want."

TONY WILLIAMS
sports@metro.us

LOOSE DENTURES?
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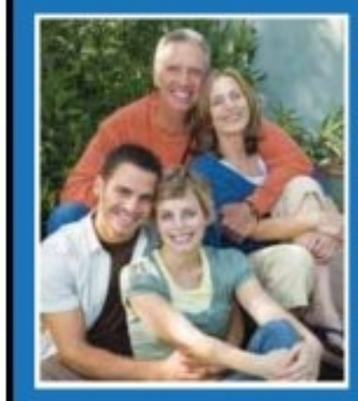
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ALWAYS NEXT SEASON

Momentum is a powerful thing. For those that are out of the playoffs, it's still worth watching to see who can catch the wave.

Last season, the Lions won their final four games. The Packers won their last six. **Rob Gronkowski** caught four touchdowns in Weeks 14-17. It's not a coincidence that they all had big years in 2011.

Here are some hot players with chances to keep it going next year:

Don't cry over Spiller

C.J. Spiller has proven that he has enough big-play ability and toughness to carry the load. **Fred Jackson** is also off a major injury and an impending free agent. At the very least, Spiller has earned a timeshare next season.

Tebow time

John Elway finally came out and said that **Tim Tebow** isn't going anywhere. With another offseason to work on his passing, Tebow will easily be a top-8 fantasy quarterback next year.

Hello, Helu

Mike Shanahan has found his one-cut back of the future. **Roy Helu** has taken over the feature back job with force, racking up 23 or more carries in four straight. He'll only get better as a sophomore.

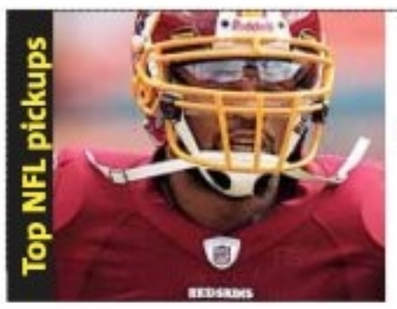
C.J. Spiller is showing explosive ability late in the year.

NFL news

Bad Ben

▶ **Ben Roethlisberger** should not have played Monday night. And now he'll probably rest until the playoffs. The Steelers roll with Charlie Batch and still beat the Rams on Saturday, but it's a major blow to owners of Mike Wallace and Antonio Brown. Downgrade them.

Top NFL pickups



Jabar Gaffney

▶ **WR, Vikings**
Gaffney has a dream matchup against the Vikings and has extreme chemistry with Rex Grossman. He's a WR3 this week.

Kahlil Bell

▶ **RB, Bears**
Bell is better than Marion Barber in the passing game and the Bears are always losing. Bell is essentially the No. 1 back.

Demaryius Thomas

▶ **WR, Broncos**
Thomas has replaced Eddie Royal as the starter. He also sees 1-on-1 coverage all day thanks to Tim Tebow. There's upside here.

NBA is back

Here are three sleepers to target later in fantasy hoops drafts:

1 **Toney Douglas, PG, NYK —** Chauncey Billups is on the Clips and Baron Davis is hurt. Douglas will push for the league lead in 3-pointers.

2 **Paul George, SG, IND —** George grew to 6-foot-10 and still has his starting shooting guard skills and role. There's potential for a big breakout here.

3 **Tyrus Thomas, PF, CHA —** Thomas' knee is healthy and he's the starting power forward. One of the game's best natural shot-blockers.

68.1
Aaron Rodgers's completion percentage is 68.1 percent this season. That would be top-20 all-time.

40
Passing touchdowns for Rodgers this season. That is first in the NFL, by three more than Drew Brees.

6
Interceptions thrown by Rodgers this season, second in the NFL among qualifiers, but Alex Smith has 16 TDs.

120
Rodgers leads the NFL in quarterback rating, at 120.1. The all-time record is 121.1 by Peyton Manning (2004).

36
Rodgers has been sacked 36 times this year, tied for first in the NFL with Sam Bradford and Blaine Gabbert.

1
Aaron Rodgers won his first AP Male Athlete of the Year Award yesterday. Justin Verlander finished second.

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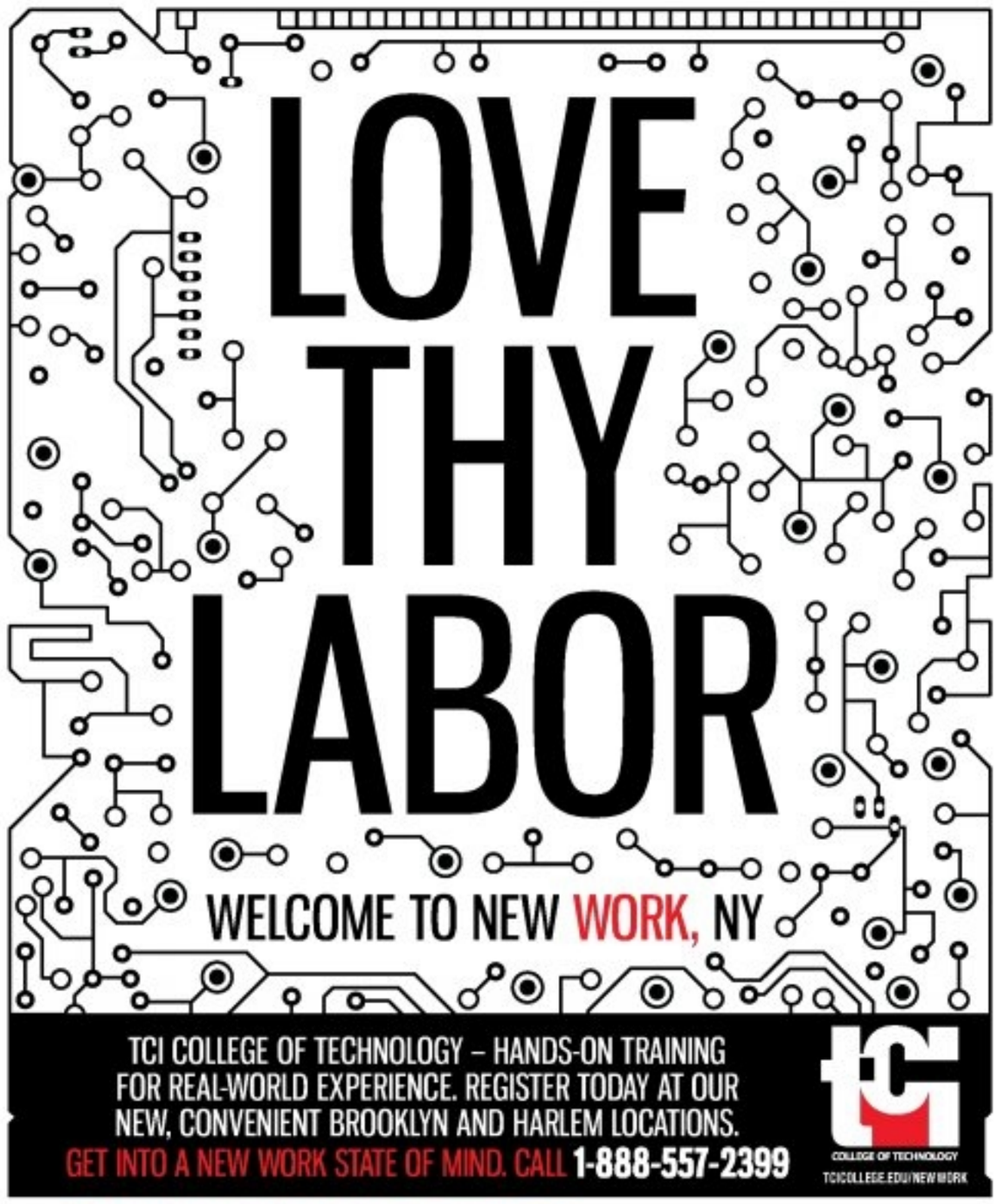
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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a license, serial # 1259077, to be assigned for Restaurant Wine license has been applied for Gal Bi Ma Eul Inc to sell Wine & Beer at retail in a restaurant under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law at 194-03 Northern Blvd, Flushing, NY 11358 for on premise consumption.

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a license, serial # 1259582 for Restaurant-Wine has been applied for by the undersigned to sell Beer & Wine at retail in a restaurant under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law at Tacos Y Jugos Corp, located at: 78-04 Woodside Ave. Woodside, NY 11373 for on-premise consumption

NOTICE OF FORMATION of RLFNY Consulting LLC. Art. Of Org. filed with Secy. Of State of NY (SSNY) on December 7, 2011. Office location: New York County. SSNY designated as agent of LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail process to: Neil D. Ash, 122 East 42nd Street, Suite 1507, New York, NY 10168. Purpose: Any lawful activity.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a license, serial # 1259360 for Beer & Wine has been applied for by the undersigned to sell Beer & Wine at retail in a restaurant under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law at: 1380 Parker Street, Bronx, NY 10462 for on-premise consumption. MADELYN COFFEE SHOP LLC.

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